

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 STRE-00 AGRE-00 AID-05

CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00

SP-02 STR-05 TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /063 W

-----003260 231535Z /53

R 231421Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3978

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

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USEEC

PASS AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY

PARIS ALSO FOR USOECD

GENEVA ALSO FOR USMTN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, EEC

SUBJ: EC REGULATIONS ON DISTILLED SPIRITS

REF: (A) STATE 293216, (B) STATE 158027, (C) EC A-15,

(D) 76 EC A-203

1. SUMMARY: IN FOLLOWUP TO REF. A, MISSION CONFIRMS THAT EC IS CONSIDERING DEFINITIONS FOR DISTILLED SPIRITS WHICH COULD POTENTIALLY CONFLICT WITH U.S. INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING MINIMUM AGING REQUIREMENTS. PROPOSAL ON LABELING OF FOODSTUFFS NOT EXPECTED TO REQUIRE INGREDIENT LABELING FOR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES. END SUMMARY.

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2. REF. A REQUESTS THAT MISSION DETERMINE (1) WHETHER DEFINITIONS ARE NOW BEING CONSIDERED BY EC FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF DISTILLED SPIRITS WHICH COULD DISCRIMINATE AGAINST NON-MALT WHISKIES, AND (2) WHETHER A SYSTEM OF PARTIAL INGREDIENT LABELING WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR LIQUORS.

3. COMMISSION OFFICIAL WORKING ON ALCOHOL IN DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE (MAUREL) SAID THAT DEFINITIONS FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF DISTILLED SPIRITS ARE NOW BEING CONSIDERED AT THE COMMISSION AND AT THE MEMBER STATE WORKING GROUP LEVEL. HE SAID THAT THE COMMISSION IS TAKING U.S. AND OTHER THIRD COUNTRY DEFINITIONS INTO ACCOUNT IN DRAWING UP DEFINITIONS FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE REVISED PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH AN ALCOHOL CAP (REF. C). EARLIER THIS YEAR, COMMISSION OFFICIALS HAD REQUESTED AND RECEIVED A COPY OF U.S. REGULATIONS ON LABELING AND ADVERTISING OF DISTILLED SPIRITS (REF. B). HE SAID THAT THE COMMISSION IS CONSIDERING A GENERAL DEFINITION FOR WHISKIES AND THAT HE IS DISPOSED TO USING A MINIMUM AGING PERIOD OF 2 YEARS, WHICH HE SAID IS IN LINE WITH U.S. REQUIREMENTS. HE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT AT THE WORKING GROUP LEVEL OF THE COUNCIL, THE UK AND IRELAND ARE PUSHING FOR A 3-YEAR MINIMUM AGING REQUIREMENT FOR ALL WHISKIES. COMMISSION OFFICIALS ARE, THEREFORE, REPORTEDLY ATTEMPTING TO ASSESS THE IMPACT FOR MEMBER STATES AND THIRD COUNTRIES OF USING EITHER A 1, 2, OR 3-YEAR MATURATION PERIOD, BUT IT IS NOT CLEAR AT THIS POINT WHAT THE FINAL OUTCOME WILL BE.

4. UK PERMDEL SOURCE INDICATED THAT UK PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN MAKING SURE THAT ANY FINAL EC DEFINITIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TAKE UK INTERESTS INTO ACCOUNT (SCOTCH WHISKY REQUIRES A MINIMUM MATURATION PERIOD OF 3 YEARS). UK PERMDEL SOURCE SAW NO PARTICULAR REASON WHY EVENTUAL EC DEFINITION COULDN'T ACCOMMODATE U.S. NON-MALT WHISKY SUCH AS BOURBON, BUT WAS NOT SPECIFIC AS TO HOW THIS MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN CONTEXT OF UK PUSH FOR A 3-YEAR MATURATION MINIMUM. ACCORDING TO PERMDEL AND COMMISSION SOURCES, THE PROPOSAL WILL LIKELY NOT COME UP FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BEFORE MID-1978.

5. THE MISSION SUGGESTS THAT SINCE THE FORMULATION OF DEFINITIONS FOR DISTILLED SPIRITS IS STILL IN THE PRELIMINARY DRAFTING STAGE AND AS THE COMMISSION IS ALREADY AWARE OF U.S. REGULATIONS IN THIS REGARD, THAT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION AT THIS TIME WOULD BE FOR U.S. GOVERNMENT AND/OR INDUSTRY TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT FOR U.S. TRADE OF A 3-YEAR AGING MINIMUM FOR WHISKY AND TO PREPARE A REPORT DELINEATING THE MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE DEFINITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTILLED SPIRITS OF TRADE INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES. THIS COULD POTENTIALLY THEN BE USED AS A BASIS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH EC OFFICIALS AS A CLEARER DRAFTING

OF DEFINITIONS EMERGES.

6. THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON LABELING (REF. D) WAS FORWARDED TO THE COUNCIL LAST MARCH. IT IS EXPECTED TO COME UP FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL IN MID-1978. COMMISSION OFFICIAL (KINCH) SAID, HOWEVER, THAT AS IT IS THE COMMISSION'S DESIRE TO MAINTAIN UNIFORMITY REGARDING LABELING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND SINCE NO INGREDIENT LABELING IS PRESENTLY REQUIRED FOR WINES, NONE WOULD BE REQUIRED WITH RESPECT TO BOTTLED SPIRITS UNDER THE CURRENT PROPOSAL. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE THE COMMISSION'S INTENTION TO ASK THAT MEMBER STATES MAINTAIN

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
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TRSE-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STRE-00 AGRE-00 /063 W
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CURRENT NATIONAL REGULATIONS UNTIL THE WHOLE ISSUE OF INGREDIENT LABELING COULD BE TAKEN UP AT SOME LATER TIME. ONLY DENMARK MAINTAINS LABELING REQUIREMENTS FOR ALCVULATIONS. THE COMMISSIONERS HAVE REPORTEDLY ASKED THAT THE VARIOUS COMMISSION SERVICES RECONSIDER THE WHOLE ISSUE OF INGREDIENT LABELING FOR ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES. IN THE JUDGEMENT OF ONE COMMISSION OFFICIAL, A PROPOSAL ALONG THESE LINES COULD SURFACE IN 2-3 YEARS. HINTON

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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